Madam President,

Let me first congratulate you on the confirmation of your nomination as a president of the CCW Fifth Review Conference. We value very much your dedicated preparatory work, and that of officeholders, which laid the ground for a promising start of the proceedings of the Review Conference. I can assure you of the full support of the Bulgarian delegation for your endeavour to lead this important forum to substantial outcomes.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the excellent work of the Implementation Support Unit not only in preparing the Review Conference but in efficiently running the whole CCW-related work.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I will make some remarks from national perspective that are of particular importance to us.

Bulgaria is committed to strengthen the implementation and enhance the relevance of the Conventional Weapons Convention. It is an important instrument of the International Humanitarian Law and has significant role in preventing and alleviating human suffering around the world. But it also brings together different types of expertise thus providing an appropriate forum to respond to new developments in weapons technologies. The Fifth Review Conference has to demonstrate that the CCW lives up to these tasks.

The universalisation of the Convention is an important tool to ensure the effectiveness of the CCW and its protocols. The adopted Accelerated Plan of Action on Universalization at the Forth Review Conference proved its usefulness in promoting universalization. We commend the efforts of the successive CCW Presidents and officeholders in this regard as well as the steps undertaken by the ISU. We recognize also the support given to the universalization efforts by the ICRC and other organizations. We urge those states that are not yet parties to the CCW to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention and its protocols. Recent disturbing reports on alleged use of incendiary weapons against civilian population, which are of great concern to us, emphasize once again the importance of universalization and implementation of the CCW and its protocols.

The full implementation of the CCW can be ensured through compliance with its provisions. In this context we stress the importance of submission of annual compliance reports by all
States Parties. We would support some practical steps, like the establishment of a military roster of experts to assist in national reporting, that would enhance the implementation.

We value very much the work done by the coordinators under Amended Protocol II in addressing the issue of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). IEDs’ use poses serious humanitarian and security problems. Therefore, an enhanced cooperation is needed to respond to this threat. We support the recommendation to continue the exchange of information with a view to drafting guidelines on IEDs risk education methods. We believe that the answers to the counter-IED questionnaire, to which Bulgaria also provided input, will contribute to improving the international cooperation in counter-IED efforts and strengthening national capacities. We welcome the agreement on a political declaration on countering the challenges of IEDs, that highlights the importance of this issue for CCW and expect it will be endorsed by the Review Conference.

The CCW, as a forum that gathers diplomatic and military expertise, is a right place to address issues of new and emerging types of weapons and technologies and their relevance to the principles of the International Humanitarian Law. Example in this regard is the consideration of Lethal Autonomous Weapons systems (LAWs) in the last three years. The experts’ discussions addressed important legal, technical, military and ethical aspects of this issue. This year the Group of Experts was able to agree substantive recommendations to the Fifth Review Conference. We support these recommendations, including the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts.

The issue of mines other than anti-personal mines (MOTAPM) remains one of the important topics on the CCW agenda. We share the concerns about the humanitarian impact that may be caused by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of MOTAPM. At the same time, we support the need to seek the right balance between the humanitarian concern and military considerations as this is a legitimate type of weapon if protection of civilians is ensured in accordance with the International Humanitarian Law. Therefore we would support a mandate on MOTAPM that would allow for a meaningful continuation of the discussion on this issue in CCW.

Thank you.